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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7336
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 7206
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TAGS: PGOV PHUM KDEM KJUS ASEC TH

SUBJECT: AMNESTY FOR THAI RAK THAI? TRIAL BALLOON POPS

REF: A. BANGKOK 2994 (TRT DISSOLVED)

1B. BANGKOK 2993 (DEMOCRAT PARTY CLEARED)

1C. BANGKOK 2956 (UPCOMING RULINGS)

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) In public remarks on the evening of June 1, Council for National Security (CNS) Chairman General Sonthi Boonyaratglin expressed support for the idea of an amnesty for some Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party executives who lost their political rights as a result of the May 30 Constitutional Tribunal ruling (ref A). Sonthi said the executive branch and the National Legislative Assembly (NLA) could work out the details of such an amnesty, to promote national reconciliation and spare TRT executive board members not involved in improprieties.

12. (U) The following day, Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont showed a reluctance to pursue this idea, saying he would need first to study the Tribunal's ruling. Soon thereafter, amid a wave of criticism of the amnesty concept, Sonthi backpedaled, claiming the proposal emanated from the NLA rather than the CNS.

13. (C) Comment: Having 111 of the most influential politicians in the country embittered and aggrieved, and feeling that they have nothing to lose, is not an outcome likely to contribute to political stability. GEN Sonthi's trial balloon may indicate that the government/CNS are considering ways to address this problem. Although the political ban on the TRT members is the logical result of the CNS's policies, it does not appear that the CNS is entirely comfortable with the possible repercussions of the Tribunal's decision. Amnesty is a potential solution, but would also be very controversial. Only one thing is clear: although the Tribunal's ruling was said to be final, the legal status of TRT figures remains in play.

BOYCE